



## Understanding Teacher Happiness through the lens of Teacher Effectiveness, Work Environment and Ethics: A systematic Analysis

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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.18081325](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18081325)

Submission Date: 30 Oct. 2025 | Published Date: 29 Dec. 2025

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### Abstract

*Happiness has increasingly been recognised as an essential focus within educational research because of its close association with emotional well-being, professional competence, and overall quality of life. Within schools, teachers' happiness influences not only their personal psychological experiences but also their instructional practices, engagement with students, and relationships with colleagues.*

*This review brings together existing knowledge on teacher happiness, exploring its links with professional effectiveness, workplace conditions, and ethical dimensions of teaching. Findings suggest that happiness is shaped by a combination of personal characteristics, social resources, resilience, physical health, and the pressures associated with professional work. Elements of the school environment such as leadership approaches, organisational culture, and the nature of social relationships, play a particularly significant role in shaping teachers' emotional well-being. Teachers who experience greater happiness tend to exhibit stronger classroom management, more effective interpersonal communication, higher motivation, and better capacity to cope with challenges. Ethical commitment and a sense of moral fulfilment further contribute to happiness by fostering purpose, coherence, and alignment with professional values. Despite growing academic interest in this domain, research that brings together happiness, teacher effectiveness, environmental conditions, and ethics remains scarce, especially in the context of Indian secondary schools.*

*Overall, happiness emerges as a multidimensional and professionally meaningful construct. There is a clear need for research that is culturally grounded, holistic, and intervention-oriented, in order to support teachers' well-being and enhance the effectiveness of educational practice.*

**Keywords:** Happiness, teacher effectiveness, work environment, ethics.

## 1. Introduction

Happiness has increasingly become a topic of interest in educational research, not only as a pleasant emotional state but as an indicator of personal well-being and professional functioning. In educational contexts, teachers' happiness is significant because it is closely related to motivation, performance, and workplace relationships (Shukla, 2014; Kaur, 2014). Research on happiness has explored diverse professional groups to understand why some individuals experience greater well-being than others. Within teaching, higher levels of happiness are often associated with job satisfaction, stronger work engagement, and healthier interactions with colleagues and students (Field & Buitendach, 2011; Maltin & Meyer, 2011).

Teacher effectiveness is another important correlate of happiness. Confident and skilled teachers tend to express greater satisfaction with their roles and a stronger sense of professional identity (Shukla, 2014; Kaur, 2011). Psychological resources such as self-efficacy and optimism are frequently highlighted as predictors of happiness and performance, although findings remain variable across studies (Jodhawat, 2013; Rantika & Yustina, 2017). These patterns suggest that individual capacities may support both positive emotions and professional functioning.

Workplace conditions also shape happiness by influencing how teachers perceive and engage with their environment. Supportive organisational climates, positive leadership, and collaborative cultures contribute to greater psychological well-being, while demanding or unsupportive work environments may reduce happiness and performance (Kaur, 2011; Field & Buitendach, 2011). In some settings, organisational support is a significant predictor of employee happiness (Jodhawat, 2013), highlighting the importance of prioritising workplace relationships and structures alongside individual traits.

Ethical considerations introduce an additional, often overlooked, dimension of happiness. Many professionals, including teachers, associate ethical practice with personal integrity, meaning, and fulfilment (Prayoga, Rufaedah, & Abraham, 2016). Research suggests that ethical alignment can enhance mental health, life satisfaction, and organisational commitment (Banisi, 2019; Kaur, 2014; Maltin & Meyer, 2011). Conversely, ethical misalignment or moral stress may diminish well-being. Furthermore, happiness itself may influence ethical judgement, as individuals' sense of well-being shapes their decision making and moral evaluations (James, 2003).

Overall, the literature indicates that teacher happiness emerges from a dynamic interaction of psychological strengths, professional competence, organisational climate, and ethical values. Although demographic variables show mixed effects, both personal and contextual resources consistently predict higher well-being and more effective professional functioning (Maltin & Meyer, 2011; Kaur, 2014; Shukla, 2014; Rantika & Yustina, 2017; Banisi, 2019). Understanding how these elements influence teachers is therefore essential for creating educational environments in which both teachers and learners can thrive.

## 2. Happiness: Present Scenario

Happiness is often seen as a simple idea, yet it is surprisingly difficult to define. Psychological research has tried to unpack it by looking at how people feel, think, and behave in their daily lives. Over the years, researchers have studied happiness in different groups; including students, teachers, and the general population to understand who tends to feel happier and why. Studies with university students, for example, generally show similar levels of well-being among males and females (Kaur & Chopra, 2021; Amin & Shah, 2020), although some have reported gender differences in certain aspects of psychological health (Risangi, 2019). Among teachers, the results are just as varied: some research suggests that teachers experience moderate to high happiness (Mertoğlu, 2018), while other studies like those focusing on primary school teachers show much lower levels of well-being (Panda & Sinha, 2020).

In educational settings, happiness and psychological well-being are often closely tied to how satisfied teachers feel with their jobs, how effectively they teach, and how they handle emotional demands. Teachers who report being happier tend to work more efficiently, enjoy better social relationships, and experience fewer health problems, with job satisfaction acting as a key factor in these outcomes (Benevene, Ittan, & Cortini, 2018). Higher happiness is also linked to stronger teaching performance and engagement at work (Gokmen, 2018). On the other hand, when teachers face heavy workloads, stress, or inadequate support, their happiness tends to decline (Panda & Sinha, 2020).

Demographic factors such as gender, marital status, age, experience, and the type of school teachers work in have shown inconsistent associations with happiness. Some studies find no meaningful gender differences (Kaur & Chopra, 2021; Akram, 2019), while others suggest that men and women may experience different levels of mental health and job satisfaction (Risangi, 2019). Marital status has also been linked to differing well-being outcomes like for example, single teachers may feel more personal growth and purpose, whereas married teachers often report higher levels of autonomy (Akram, 2019). In India, differences in happiness have also been found between teachers based on school type and location, with urban and government school teachers expressing different levels of satisfaction (Buragohain & Hazarika, 2015).

Across studies, personal psychological characteristics consistently emerge as strong predictors of happiness. Traits such as resilience, internal locus of control, extraversion, and openness are associated with higher well-being, whereas neuroticism and external locus of control are linked to lower happiness (Gupta & Kumar, 2009; Kharbade, 2014). Happiness is also related to how individuals find meaning, experience pleasure, and engage with life factors that contribute to overall life satisfaction (Chan, 2009).

Research outside the field of education supports these patterns. Large-scale studies in Europe, for example, show that happiness is shaped by a wide range of life circumstances, including health, employment, financial security, relationships, community trust, and religious beliefs (Doherty & Kelly, 2010). Other work highlights the importance of meaningful relationships, fulfilling work, and autonomy as central to well-being (Clark, Layard, & Senik, 2012).

Importantly, happiness is not viewed as a fixed trait. Intervention research shows that well-being can be improved through deliberate activities that encourage positive thinking, gratitude, and emotional regulation (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). This suggests that happiness is something people can cultivate over time, especially in supportive environments.

Overall, the literature indicates that happiness is shaped by a complex mix of personal strengths, work conditions, and social relationships. While demographic factors produce mixed results, psychological resources and supportive workplaces consistently predict higher levels of happiness and better professional functioning. Job satisfaction also appears central, influencing not just happiness itself but related outcomes such as health, performance, and overall well-being.

### 3. Happiness and Teacher Effectiveness

Teacher happiness reflects the positive emotions, satisfaction, and sense of personal fulfilment that educators experience in their work. Teacher effectiveness may play a key role, as confident and capable teachers generally show a more positive attitude toward their professional responsibilities. This review summarises research exploring how happiness and self-efficacy relate to one another.

Ihtiyaroglu (2018) studied teachers in Ankara, Turkey, and found that happiness involves emotional and cognitive satisfaction, a predominance of positive emotions, and fewer negative feelings. Teachers who reported greater well-being also demonstrated healthier professional functioning than those with lower happiness levels.

Duran and Yildirim (2017) examined 501 school administrators and identified a positive, though moderate, relationship between happiness and self-efficacy. Their results also suggested that these perceptions vary according to years of service.

Research from Ghorbannia and Barani (2016), involving 234 secondary teachers in Golestan, indicated that spiritual intelligence, self-efficacy, and happiness are strongly and positively linked. Similarly, Hajizadeh, Shabani, and Bakhtari (2016) reported positive associations between self-efficacy, happiness, and vocational competence among 108 primary school teachers, suggesting that happier teachers tend to feel more capable.

Some studies focus on psychological resources. For example, Erozkhan, Dogan, and Adiguzel (2016) showed that subjective happiness among 556 teacher trainees was positively related to persistence, effort, and self-confidence. Pordanjani, Yahyanezhad, and Moharer (2014) also found that self-efficacy predicts satisfaction in both male and female university students. Similarly, Singh and Mansi (2009) reported that self-efficacy, optimism, and locus of control significantly influence psychological well-being. Other work highlights the role of emotional intelligence and religiosity in supporting adolescent well-being (Adeyemo & Adeleye, 2008).

Several studies specifically investigate teachers. Mehdinezhad (2012) showed that high school teachers in Iran scored above average in both well-being and teacher efficacy, with older, married teachers and those with moderate experience showing stronger efficacy. A strong positive association was found between well-being and teacher effectiveness.

While most studies show positive links, findings are not entirely consistent. Salimirad and Srimathi (2016) reported a negative relationship between psychological well-being and occupational self-efficacy among 600 teachers in Mysore, with no major gender or school-type differences.

Overall, the literature points to a generally strong positive association between happiness and teacher effectiveness (Singh, 2013; Singh & Mansi, 2009; Mehdinezhad, 2012; Erozkhan et al., 2016; Ghorbannia & Barani, 2016; Hajizadeh et al., 2016; Duran & Yildirim, 2017; Gokmen, 2018).

In brief, happier teachers generally feel more competent, cope better, and function more effectively at work, though the relationship may vary depending on personal and organisational factors.

### 4. Happiness and the Work Environment

Teacher ethics has been suggested as an important factor influencing their happiness and overall well-being. However, research directly linking professional ethics and teacher happiness is limited, and most existing studies examine related variables rather than this specific relationship.

Banisi (2019), studying 327 employees in Iran's education ministry, found that ethical behaviour was strongly linked to mental health, explaining a substantial proportion of its variation. Similarly, Rantika and Yustina (2017) showed that ethical leadership increased employee well-being and work engagement among auditors in Jakarta by strengthening psychological empowerment.

Several studies highlight that happiness may be rooted less in rewards and status, and more in meaningful, ethical work. For instance, Prayoga, Rufaedah, and Abraham (2016) interviewed professionals from multiple occupations, including teachers, and found that satisfaction stemmed from contributing to society ethically rather than from income or prestige. Shukla (2014) reported that teachers with higher job satisfaction also demonstrated stronger professional commitment, suggesting that happier teachers are more engaged and perform more effectively.

Studies among educators also highlight meaningful associations between ethics, life satisfaction, and commitment. Kaur (2014) found a significant relationship between professional ethics and life satisfaction among secondary school teachers, while Kaur (2011) reported that professional commitment, organisational climate, and life satisfaction were positively related among educators, particularly among female teachers and those in non-government schools. Field and Buitendach (2011) also demonstrated that happiness and work engagement were strong predictors of emotional organisational commitment among university support staff.

Research outside education offers further insight. Jodhawat (2013) observed that happiness, optimism, and personal growth were associated with organisational commitment among call centre workers, while workplace support predicted happiness. Maltin and Meyer's (2011) meta-analysis found that affective commitment promotes well-being, and James (2003) showed that a person's happiness influences their ethical decision-making.

Collectively, the literature suggests a positive relationship between happiness, life satisfaction, and organisational commitment (Maltin & Meyer, 2011; Kaur, 2014; Shukla, 2014; Rantika & Yustina, 2017; Banisi, 2019). However, most studies focus on work engagement or organisational commitment rather than directly exploring how professional ethics contributes to teacher happiness.

In summary, while evidence indicates that ethical behaviour, meaningful work, and strong professional commitment are linked to greater well-being, there remains a notable gap in research specifically investigating the role of professional ethics in teacher happiness.

## 5. Happiness and Ethics

Professional ethics, encompassing moral principles and commitments, represents a subtle yet powerful contributor to teacher happiness (Kaur, 2014). Teachers often perceive their work as morally significant, with ethical practice providing a sense of purpose, integrity, and fulfillment (Banisi, 2019). Researcher also found that ethical alignment strongly predicted mental health among education staff, while Kaur (2014) reported a positive association between professional ethics and life satisfaction among teachers.

Ethical behavior contributes to happiness in several ways:

**Sense of Purpose:** Acting ethically reinforces the teacher's moral mission and professional identity (Kaur, 2014).

**Integrity and Authenticity:** Alignment between actions and values supports psychological coherence (Banisi, 2019).

**Social Respect and Trust:** Ethical conduct fosters positive relationships with students, colleagues, and the community (Kaur, 2014).

**Self-Efficacy and Pride:** Maintaining ethical standards enhances professional competence and dignity (Banisi, 2019).

Ethical conflicts, however, can diminish happiness, particularly when institutional demands challenge moral ideals. Teachers who navigate ethical dilemmas without support may experience stress, frustration, and reduced job satisfaction (Salimrad & Srimathi, 2016). These findings highlight the importance of fostering environments that allow teachers to exercise ethical autonomy while reinforcing the moral dimension of professional well-being (Banisi, 2019; Kaur, 2014).

## 6. Discussion

The literature reviewed indicates that teacher happiness is a multidimensional construct influenced by psychological resources, workplace conditions, and ethical orientations. Happiness not only reflects teachers' emotional states but also relates to broader professional functioning. Empirical findings consistently show that happier teachers demonstrate greater engagement, stronger interpersonal relationships, and healthier functioning in their professional roles (Mertoğlu, 2018; Gokmen, 2018). This supports the notion that happiness may act both as an antecedent and a consequence of professional effectiveness, reflecting a reciprocal relationship between emotional well-being and job performance. Such evidence underscores that teacher well-being is not a peripheral concern, but a central component of quality education.

Work environment features prominently as a determinant of teacher happiness. Supportive organisational climates, positive social relationships, and manageable workloads are repeatedly associated with enhanced well-being, job satisfaction, and professional engagement (Shukla, 2014; Field & Buitendach, 2011; Banisi, 2019). These findings suggest that teachers' psychological outcomes are shaped not solely by personal traits but significantly by institutional contexts. Positive workplace dynamics may foster autonomy, emotional safety, and meaningful interaction, thereby enabling teachers to cope with job demands more effectively. Conversely, stress, inadequate support, and excessive workloads undermine happiness and heighten vulnerability to burnout (Panda & Sinha, 2020). Variations in findings across studies may reflect differences in school environment, leadership styles, or cultural settings.

Ethical practice emerges as a further contributing factor to teacher happiness, though research in this area remains limited. Ethical alignment, reflected in congruence between personal values and professional conduct, appears to enhance psychological well-being, organisational commitment, and life satisfaction (Kaur, 2014; Banisi, 2019). Teachers often

view their work as morally meaningful, and fulfilling ethical responsibilities may provide a sense of purpose, integrity, and professional pride (Prayoga, Rufaedah, & Abraham, 2016). Some research indicates that happiness may be rooted less in extrinsic rewards than in meaningful, socially valuable work (Shukla, 2014). These findings challenge economic models of motivation and highlight the value of nurturing ethical climates that support dignity, fairness, and shared responsibility.

However, the evidence linking ethics and happiness is fragmented. Much of the research focuses on related constructs such as organisational commitment, empowerment, or job satisfaction rather than ethical behaviour directly (Maltin & Meyer, 2011; Rantika & Yustina, 2017). Furthermore, teachers may experience ethical conflict when institutional demands contradict personal values, which can result in stress, frustration, and diminished well-being (Salimirad & Srimathi, 2016). This suggests that ethics may act as both a protective and risk factor depending on the organisational context. Future research should explore ethical climates in schools, sources of moral conflict, and their psychological consequences.

Psychological resources also play an important role in shaping happiness. Traits such as self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, and internal locus of control are consistently associated with higher well-being (Gupta & Kumar, 2009; Singh & Mansi, 2009; Erozkhan, Dogan, & Adiguzel, 2016). Some research shows that self-efficacy predicts happiness among both teachers and students (Pordanjani, Yahyanezhad, & Moharer, 2014). Yet, contradictory evidence suggests that self-efficacy does not always reinforce well-being and may occasionally relate negatively to psychological functioning (Salimirad & Srimathi, 2016). Such inconsistencies highlight the importance of contextual and cultural influences on wellbeing.

Taken together, the literature suggests that interventions to enhance happiness may need to target both individual skills and organisational conditions. Programs designed to strengthen emotional regulation, optimism, and meaning-making may be beneficial, but their effectiveness is likely to depend on supportive structural environments (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). Schools that prioritise ethical practice, professional autonomy, and collegial support may not only improve teacher well-being but also organisational outcomes such as instructional quality and commitment (Maltin & Meyer, 2011; Kaur, 2014).

Overall, the evidence suggests that teacher happiness should be regarded as an educational priority rather than a private concern. Optimising teacher well-being through supportive, ethical, and empowering environments may foster not only healthier teachers but also more effective teaching, stable organisational cultures, and better student outcomes. Future research would benefit from integrative designs that simultaneously examine psychological, organisational, and ethical determinants of happiness, offering a holistic understanding of well-being within educational systems.

## 7. Conclusion

The body of research on teacher happiness highlights that well-being is not a luxury for educators but a foundation for meaningful and effective teaching. Happiness among teachers appears to grow out of a complex mix of personal strengths, supportive work environments, and a sense of ethical purpose. When teachers feel valued, connected, and confident in their abilities, they are more likely to approach their work with enthusiasm, resilience, and creativity. In turn, their professional competence and relationships with students tend to benefit.

The evidence shows that happiness is closely intertwined with job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and workplace engagement. Teachers who experience positive emotions and a sense of fulfilment often perform better and cope more effectively with the demands of the profession. However, the research also reveals wide variations in happiness levels across different educational contexts. Heavy workloads, limited support, and misalignment between personal values and institutional practices can lead to stress and diminished well-being. These patterns remind us that teacher happiness is not simply a result of personality, but also shaped by the quality of the systems in which teachers work.

Ethical practice and meaningful work consistently emerge as important, albeit understudied, contributors to happiness. Teachers often enter the profession with a strong moral sense and a desire to contribute to society. When schools acknowledge and support these ethical commitments, teachers are more likely to feel purposeful and satisfied. Conversely, environments that undermine moral autonomy can erode well-being and disengage educators from their work.

Overall, the literature suggests that supporting teacher happiness requires attention to both internal and external factors. Building personal skills such as resilience and emotional regulation is important, but so is creating environments that are respectful, collaborative, and ethically grounded. Ultimately, when teachers' well-being is prioritised, schools benefit from healthier climates, stronger professional commitment, and improved outcomes for students. Happiness, then, is not merely a personal state but an essential element of a thriving educational system.

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#### CITATION

Dwivedi, D., & Yadav, A. (2025). Understanding Teacher Happiness through the lens of Teacher Effectiveness, Work Environment and Ethics: A systematic Analysis. In *Global Journal of Research in Humanities & Cultural Studies* (Vol. 5, Number 6, pp. 70–76). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18081325>



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